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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NEW DELHI 000795

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SUBJECT: COMMUNISTS AND BJP/RSS TAKE THEIR KERALA STREET FIGHT TO DELHI

REF: A. 07 CHENNAI 1707
[1](#)B. 07 DELHI 5157
[1](#)C. 07 DELHI 5059
[1](#)D. 07 KOLKATA 351
[1](#)E. 07 KOLKATA 345
[1](#)F. 07 KOLKATA 323

Classified By: PolCouns Ted Osius for reasons 1.4 (B,D)

[11.](#) (C) Summary The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Communist Party of India - Marxist (CPM) battled each other last week in parliament, on the Delhi street and in Kerala over who was to blame for violence between the CPM and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in Kerala. BJP members of parliament stalled business in both houses for three days, demanding dismissal of the CPM-led Kerala government and intervention by central police forces to quell CPM violence against RSS workers in the state. Since March 5, five RSS/BJP workers and two CPM members have died and several others injured in tit-for-tat political violence in Kerala's Kannur district. On March 9, a clash broke out in Delhi when RSS and BJP workers marched to the CPM headquarters to protest CPM actions in Kerala. Chief Minister Achutanandan appears to have brokered a temporary peace by convening an all-party meeting on March 15 in Trivandrum, Kerala. The RSS/BJP altercation with the CPM shows the deep and abiding hostility between the two sides. The Kannur violence coming on top of violence in Nandigram and Munnar (reflets) in recent months shows the propensity of the CPM to use violence and brutal tactics to protect its turf. It may have found its match, however, in the willingness of the RSS to go toe-to-toe with it. The Congress Party, meanwhile, is not too displeased to see its two chief antagonists on the left and the right in a bloody fight. End Summary.

Pandemonium in Parliament

[12.](#) (U) For a third day running, business in both houses of parliament stalled on March 13 due to an unruly verbal brawl between BJP and CPM members over violence between the cadres of the two parties in Kerala and Delhi. The BJP members

demanded the dismissal of the CPM-led Kerala government for condoning the violence against Rashtriya Swayansevak Sangh (RSS) workers and called for the dispatch of central government police forces to the state to maintain law and order. The CPM's Sitaram Yechury released a list of 46 RSS attacks on CPM facilities and workers in Kerala since June 12006. The two parties also battled in parliament the previous two days with each accusing the other of inciting the violence, first in Kerala and then in Delhi, where workers of the two parties clashed on March 9 when a RSS protest at CPM headquarters turned violent. At one point pandemonium erupted when a Congress member demanded a ban on the RSS, prompting BJP members to rush into the well of the House to disrupt parliament.

Kannur: A Communist Stronghold

13. (U) The drama in parliament was triggered by events in Kerala when a March 5 CPM attack left one RSS activist seriously injured in Thallassery in the Kunnar district of the state. That same day, local RSS workers allegedly killed one CPI-M worker in retaliation. The CPM responded within hours by hacking to death two RSS supporters. Over the next three days, four more died. In all, seven people - five BJP/RSS workers and two CPM members -- have died in the district since March 5 in tit-for-tat political killings. Several others have been injured.

14. (SBU) Thallassery in Kannur district is the home of Kerala's Communist movement. Several of the state's top Communist leaders, including CPM state Secretary Pinarayi

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Vijayan and Kerala Home Minister Kodiyeri Balakrishnan find their roots in this district. Thallassery is also known as a CPM stronghold where party workers do not tolerate opposition political activity. A growing BJP/RSS presence since the 1980s in some regions of Kerala, including Kannur, has led to mounting tensions and occasional flare-ups, although none as violent and prolonged as the latest altercations. While the recent violence pits BJP/RSS supporters against the CPI-M, several years ago CPM workers used similar tactics in Thallassery against Congress Party supporters, who were unable to hold their ground in such bloody street fighting.

Violence Shifts to Delhi

15. (SBU) Protesting the violence and death of party workers in Kerala, BJP/RSS supporters marched to the CPM headquarters in Delhi on March 9 while the CPM Central Committee was meeting. According to press reports, violence erupted when cars full of BJP and RSS workers, allegedly with placards calling the CPM a terrorist party, tried to force their way into CPM headquarters. They were stopped at the entrance by CPM workers and the two sides started pelting stones at one another. Six CPM workers were injured. The BJP and RSS say many of their workers were also injured. Window panes of a number of cars, including those belonging to CPM leaders Prakash Karat and Sitaram Yechury were smashed. The offices and windows in the building suffered extensive damage. Each side accused the other of escalating the situation and blamed each other for assaulting the democratic system. Yechury called the RSS actions an "ominous" signal for democracy. BJP Deputy House Leader Malhotra said the protest was intended to be peaceful but Communist cadres from the compound began to hurl rocks.

Kerala High Court Steps In

16. (SBU) On March 11, the Kerala High Court observed that only a timely intervention by central government forces could restore law and order in a situation where the state police were clearly not able to end the partisan violence due to

police pandering to politicians. On March 12, the Opposition in Kerala's state legislature walked out in protest over the court's recommendation that central government police forces be inserted. Kerala's CPM Chief Minister V.S. Achuthanandan denounced the court's pronouncement as an unconstitutional encroachment.

Efforts to Forge a Truce in Kerala

¶7. (SBU) In a move to re-assert his leadership, Chief Minister Achuthanandan then began to play an active role. After meeting with state BJP and RSS leaders on March 12, he announced an all-party meeting for March 15 to find a way to defuse the situation. Leaders of the BJP and RSS confirmed their participation in the meeting, though they still complained of restrictions on their democratic right to organize in Kannur district. Achuthanadan appeared to rein in the CPM cadres by announcing that decisions of the meeting would be binding at all levels, from township panchayats up to the central government.

Comment: Unbounded Hostility

¶8. (C) While the violence is likely to subside quickly, the Kerala and Delhi altercations both in parliament and on the streets illustrate the deep and enduring hostility between the CPM and the BJP/RSS family. CPM leaders routinely refer to "communal" forces, a preferred CPM euphemism for the BJP/RSS, as the gravest threat facing the country. From the stridency of their rhetoric it would almost appear that CPM

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leaders believe the party's raison d'etre is stopping the BJP from gaining power. The BJP is less single-minded about the CPM but no less hostile. When in power in 1999-2004, it became accustomed to ignoring the CPM and still seems somewhat surprised every time the CPM exerts its new found power in Delhi.

Comment: Used to Heavy-handed Methods

¶9. (C) CPM-inspired violence during the last six months in Nandigram (ref C-F), Munnar (refs A and B), and now in Kannur demonstrates the heavy-handed and vicious tactics communist parties in India are prepared to use to protect their turf and beat back threats. The CPM has for years used these tactics when needed in West Bengal and Kerala. What has changed today is that the rest of India is beginning to take note of the CPM's brutish approach. The public's revulsion at these methods may help loosen CPM influence in these states. While such tactics may work against defenseless farmers in Nandigram and tribals in Munnar, the CPM in Kannur probably did not count on an equally assertive and muscular response from equally determined RSS cadres. Little wonder that the CPM in Kerala quickly sued for peace. Ultimately, the Congress Party is in such a weakened position in Kerala that the CPM no longer bothers hacking its workers to bits, focusing instead on their rising right wing nemesis, the RSS>

Comment: The Congress Quietly Smiles

¶10. (C) While the BJP/RSS and the CPM battled in Delhi and Kerala, the Congress Party happily went for the sidelines to watch the bloody slugging match between its two foremost antagonists. Home Minister Shivraj Patil said in the Rajya Sabha (upper house of parliament) that the GOI could not intervene as law and order is a state responsibility. He used the same excuse to decline calls for central police forces and an independent inquiry. On the same grounds, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha (lower house of parliament) refused to allow discussion of events in Kerala, asking the members

to "confine themselves to the attack on the CPM
headquarters."

¶11. This cable was coordinated with Consulate General
Chennai.
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